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A WOMAN'S REVENGE ★

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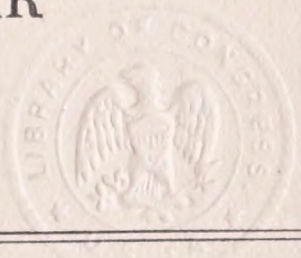
A WOMAN'S REVENGE

BY

LAW MUIR

Robert Granger



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CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.
The Bride..... 7

CHAPTER II.
At Santa Barbara..... 16

CHAPTER III.
Heart to Heart..... 24

CHAPTER IV.
Temptation..... 35

CHAPTER V.
Mose Gans..... 46

CHAPTER VI.
Lost..... 55

CHAPTER VII.
The Ruin of Mose Gans..... 61

CHAPTER VIII.
The Murder..... 73

CHAPTER IX.
The Trial..... 78

CHAPTER X.
The Execution..... 85

A WOMAN'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDE.

ONLY thirty minutes and the train for Los Angeles would leave the depot at Oakland.

The ladies of the party were becoming nervous as usual, and fretting lest the newly married couple should miss the train; but the gentlemen sat still, as there were one or two more toasts to propose—toasts to which nobody paid any particular attention.

At the head of the table sat the bride and bridegroom, he from time to time whispering in her ear words of affection which made her blush and cast her eyes down. Now and again he would drop his napkin, and stooping to recover it, would

touch her hand with his lips. These kisses would drive the blood faster through her veins, and make her heart beat with some vague, nervous fear for which she could not account.

To-day she had given herself to him for better or for worse; what would the future have in store for her? Storm or sunshine? Excitement or tranquillity? Indifference or love? Did she really love him? Did she really know what love was? She could not tell. He had courted her; her girl friends, more experienced than she, had advised her to accept him.

He was a man in a fairly good position in life; he would make her happy and provide her with a home.

She looked timidly at him—soon they would be alone,—their friends would escort them to the station and leave them, and then she would have no one but him.

He was a strong, handsome looking man, and she remembered how the girls in the store where she had been employed had envied her his attention.

"It is time to leave," one of the gentlemen cried out.

These words reminded her again that soon they would be alone.

They had reached the station and entered the train, and having put their luggage in safety, they went out to shake hands with their friends and wish them good-bye.

Much good advice was given her, and one of her friends, Miss Ruth Green, whispered something in her ear that caused the blood to mount to her face.

Her husband noticing it, said, "Don't spoil my little girl with your worldly wisdom, Miss Green;" to which that lady merely replied with a shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"All on board;" a long drawn-out whistle, a last handshake, and away sped the south-bound train.

It was half dark in the car; the lamps shed a faint light around, showing dimly the faces of the few passengers.

Taking her hand in his own he said: "Winona,

my darling, how do you feel after all that rush and excitement? Are you tired?"

She did not answer him; she only looked up and moved closer to him, the warm pressure of his hand assuring her of his love and devotion, and making her feel there was one person in the world who really cared for her; one to whom she could turn in all her troubles.

"Little one," he said, "I see you are tired; you need rest."

She nodded her assent; the day had worn her out, and she longed to be alone for a little while.

He guessed what was passing through her mind, and as the porter had just informed him that their stateroom was ready, he escorted her to it and begged her to make herself comfortable, and if she felt sleepy, to retire; he would go to the smoking compartment and try to enjoy a cigar by himself.

When he had gone she stood looking round the apartment. There was the bridal bed—she sat down on it without even removing her Fedora hat, and jacket, leaning back on the pillow.

She felt at that moment that she was but a child.

Her parents had both died years ago, and she had been compelled to work among strangers till now. The work itself she had liked, and on the whole, the people had been kind to her, had even spoiled her a little when a girl; but as she grew up, she too had had her sorrowful experiences.

Being a good-looking girl she had attracted more than the usual amount of attention from the sterner sex, attentions which sometimes had driven a flush of indignation into her face.

She had often felt that her beauty was more a curse to her than a blessing, and those persecutions, she knew well enough, had to some extent influenced her into marriage. She liked Ralph Carlton; most women would. He had a good appearance and refined manner, and to her he had been exceedingly kind.

Notwithstanding this, she was afraid of him, afraid to be alone with him; she couldn't tell why, but she felt miserable. Oh! if she could only stop the train and fly to her own little room!

All these thoughts ran through her mind; her brain was very active, but physically she felt worn out. All the excitement of the day, the talk and merry chatter of her friends, aided perhaps by the few drops of wine which had touched her lips, had produced a feeling of weariness.

She threw off her hat, and without undressing, stretched herself on the bed, where after a while, kind sleep made her forget her doubts and fears.

Meanwhile her husband had strolled down the Pullman car to the far end, and there in the smoking compartment, after dropping comfortably into one of the seats, he lighted a cigar. Blowing the smoke from it, he musingly looked back into his past life, and the retrospect was far from pleasant With to-day he had begun a new life; he had married, and he had married an innocent, virtuous woman; he wished he could have come to her as pure as she had to him.

From his childhood he had looked upon marriage as one of the most sacred of human rites. He had been fortunate enough to possess good and virtuous parents, who had set their children a

good example; and for years he had known nothing but good. It was only when he had emigrated into the West, down to the Pacific Coast, into San Francisco, that Paris in miniature, of America, that he first learned what sin was.

Everything was so free and easy-going,—men and women mixed without restriction. Married men went their own way, married women went theirs. It appeared to be an understood thing between many of these couples, that they were not to interfere with each other's pleasures. To the women, marriage seemed to be no more than a convenient cloak.

It had been Ralph's misfortune to fall into the hands of one of those female vampires; those women who hunt for the love of innocent youth, who try to rekindle their burnt-out passions at the flame of a youthful lover's affection, and after having tasted all his love can give them, ruthlessly throw him aside and go off in pursuit of some new sensation, leaving behind nothing but ashes of bitter disappointment. Out of idealists and dreamers they make libertines and cynics.

Such had been Ralph's fate also, an experience which caused him to despise women; to use them merely as playthings; paying them back in their own coin, and thereby making good women suffer for the sins of the bad.

Then he had met Winona.

The true innocence that spoke out of her child-like eyes had won his heart.

For a long time he had not dared to confess his love for her, but from the day he had first met her he had returned to views of life long forgotten. The teaching of his dear parents had come back to him; he had fancied himself back again in his childhood, praying, with his little hands folded, at his mother's knee. In those days there were no doubts of "Is there a God or not?"

At this moment, he felt he could not be thankful enough that the darling girl whom he loved had accepted him, had shown so much trust in him, had made him again respect women and believe in their purity. She should never regret it; he would carry her in his arms; he would make her life a path of roses. He knew that she could

not love him yet. Did the poor little soul know what love was? He felt that she was afraid of him, that she feared his presence with an undefinable dread.

Here on this night he made a resolution to work for her love, to win her love by waiting, and only when her heart had awakened, and she had ripened into womanhood, would he clasp her in his arms.

He threw away the cigar, which had gone out, and strolled back to the stateroom. There she was lying asleep in her full traveling dress; some of her fair hair had loosened itself and crept along the pillow; her little white hands were folded as in prayer over her gently heaving bosom.

He stood there and watched his wife. How innocent, how sweet she looked! Then he stepped up to her, and covering her with a traveling rug, he lifted her head into a more comfortable position. When his hands touched her, she sighed deeply; he lightly kissed the little hand which wore his ring, and softly closing the door behind him, returned to the smoking-room.

CHAPTER II.

AT SANTA BARBARA.

SANTA BARBARA the beautiful! Thou loveliest spot on the Pacific Coast! Thou gem of Southern California! how I do love to dream of you, of your eternal summer, your balmy air, your dark blue heaven.

Santa Barbara is a fashionable seaside resort, much frequented by tourists and by invalids, on account of its mild climate and clear, bracing atmosphere. Its principal hotel, which is one of the largest and most luxurious on the Pacific Coast, only opens its doors in the autumn, when it is largely taken advantage of by people fleeing for shelter from the storms and blizzards so prevalent in the East during the autumn and winter months.

Ralph Carlton had been in Santa Barbara years ago. He had traveled through it with the

intention of leaving in a few days; but had prolonged his stay to weeks, months, and then at last he reluctantly tore himself away, promising soon to return. His business had not permitted it, but now on his wedding tour he would see Santa Barbara again, and enjoy in the company of his young wife, a visit to all the places of which he had dreamed for years.

They went by way of Los Angeles, where they alighted and spent a few hours viewing some of the principal objects of interest in that district, after which they resumed their journey.

Reaching their destination in the afternoon, they drove up to the hotel.

The proprietor was glad to see his guest of former days, and offered him his best apartments.

Ralph engaged a suite of three rooms, and after the use of a little soap and water to refresh themselves after their long journey, they went down to dinner.

Later in the day they walked down to the beach, to inhale the balmy air and watch the rippling waves as they broke upon the sands.

Winona had lost her shyness. She enjoyed herself with the playfulness of a child, running close up to the waves, and retreating before them when they threatened to wet her shoes.

Ralph, seated on one of the rocks, watched her enjoying herself. She looked very pretty in her close fitting, Russian blue jacket, her soft, blonde hair waving in the breeze beneath her black sailor hat.

Then she came running up to him holding a small crab in her gloved hand.

"See, Ralph," she said, "what I have found; a live crab! That is the first I have ever seen alive; how funny it looks trying to bite me."

"So you are not afraid of it?" he answered, "Most girls would be, and especially as you have never seen a live one before."

"No, Ralph, I never was afraid of anything alive, but anything dead or wounded and bleeding, I am afraid of, and dread to touch."

The crab had crawled out of her hand, and was fast making for the water. She wanted to catch

it again, but Ralph taking hold of her arm, led her away with him further along the beach.

They passed in silence the bathing-houses and the pavilion, past the great rock, and soon they reached a quiet spot away from the crowd.

Then choosing a dry and comfortable place, he took off his overcoat and spread it on the sand for her, seating himself at her feet.

They both gazed in silence over the broad Pacific Ocean, a mild breeze gently fanning their faces and making them feel supremely happy:

"I could sit here for hours," she said dreamily; "it is really beautiful. I am so thankful to you, Ralph, for bringing me to Santa Barbara. I have never traveled so far before. I have only known San Francisco and its vicinity. You know," she added with a slight blush, "we shop girls can't afford to travel much."

Ralph was pleased to hear her talk and relate some episodes and reminiscences of her poor childhood, wherein she had never known a mother's love or a father's care. But she had been fortunate in finding good friends.

Not long before, she had been compelled to look out entirely for herself. She told him that about a year ago, Ruth Green, who had lived in the same house with her, had attached herself to her, and taken her out and introduced her to some of her own friends, but again she blushed—this time deeply,—"I did not like her friends; they drank and smoked with the gentlemen when we were out, and I think they are altogether too free. What do you think? One of the gentlemen wanted, the first time I was out with him—only imagine—he wanted to kiss me, and as I resisted, he got angry and said I was a little fool; that other girls would feel offended if he didn't kiss them. Such are her friends. After that night I never went out with her any more, but I could not help meeting some of those people at her rooms."

She confessed that she had felt lonesome at times, and often she had closed her door tight, so as not to hear the merry laughter in Ruth's room, where some of the girls and young men were enjoying themselves, playing, eating tomales, and drinking beer or wine. The other girls had called

her a silly fool, and tried to persuade her to give up such nonsensical prudery, as they called it, and be one of them. "There was no harm," they said, "in a kiss or two."

Then he related to her the incident which had brought them together.

One night at the Orpheum Theatre, her friend Ruth Green had told him about her, mildly ridiculing her innocence and simplicity, and jokingly telling him she would be sure to find favor in his moral eyes; and so they had met, and now they were here on the beach of Santa Barbara, husband and wife.

All nature was hushed around them. The wind had ceased to blow; the only sound was the beating of the waves on the white sand, each successive wave toiling higher and higher. Ever and anon the shrill cry of a sea gull would reach their ears, the bird soaring slowly over their heads and disappearing in the distance away across the sea. A mist was stealing in from the ocean. The valley became shrouded as with a cloak. Only on the spot where the setting sun touched the

water was seen a golden glow. He had taken her hands in his and looked up into her face. Her eyes shone brilliantly, and a smile of contentment played in the corners of her expressive mouth.

Fool that he was! Why wasn't he content to gaze on that picture? Why must he disturb her tranquillity by his coarse passion?

He got up, and leaning over her, he pressed her in his arms and covered her face with passionate kisses—kisses which alarmed her and brought back that fear of him, which she had almost overcome.

What brutes men are! Where were all his good resolutions of a night ago, that he should have allowed his wild passion, which he thought was conquered, dead, to break out again on so slight a provocation?

He walked back with her in silence along the boulevard to the hotel. At the door he asked her to go up to her own room, and wished her good night.

In a torrent of self-reproach he walked back

along the boulevard to the seashore; a strong wind was now blowing, striking pleasantly his burning temples.

"A libertine once, a libertine always." Was there no salvation, no redemption from such a curse?

But he would conquer himself. What weaklings, cowards, men were! and he had always prided himself, too, on being so strong—stronger than the average man!

Vain mortal! he could not even conquer himself.

CHAPTER III.

HEART TO HEART.

RALPH and his wife had spent a week at Santa Barbara, when his business compelled him to return to San Francisco.

He had left it to his young wife to decide whether she would live at an hotel or go into housekeeping, and she had chosen the latter.

He was glad she had done so, as he did not approve of married couples living in hotels. It might do for childless people, but parents with children were committing a crime by so doing.

It is one of the peculiar social conditions of San Francisco, that there is hardly a city of its size in the United States which equals it in the number of married people living in hotels or in lodgings, and taking their meals outside. Who is to blame for this, the husband or the wife?

Heart to Heart.

Ralph had furnished a nice little house near the park, in Ellis Street. His young wife turned out to be a very clever housewife; she took to it naturally. She liked the work, and when her husband returned from his daily work, wasn't she a thousand times repaid to see the pleased look of satisfaction come into his eyes, for the little work she had done? She would have everything ready for dinner, the table tastefully laid out and decorated with flowers from her own small garden. They would take their dinner in the cosy little dining-room, waiting on each other, no curious, prying eyes to overlook them; and after he had assisted her to remove the dishes, they would return to the dining-room where a comfortable fire burned in the grate, lighting up the room just enough to let them see each other.

He would sit down at the piano and play to her, teaching her to understand music; and it was a pleasure to him to notice that music which she had before thought unattractive and tiresome because her untrained mind had not been able to appreciate its beauties, she now began to under-

stand and listen to with delight. There they would talk—talk by the hour; he would enlighten her on many a subject she had never thought of before.

She felt more and more what an ignorant little woman she was, and she wondered how a clever man like Ralph could have chosen her for his life companion.

All her fears gradually left her. How kind he had been to her all this time!

When he returned from his daily work he would always bring something home, sometimes a trinket, sometimes a box of sweets, sometimes a little bunch of violets, her favorite flower, showing her that even in his business hours he was thinking of her. When bed time came he would kiss her on the forehead and wish her good night; then they would retire to their separate bedrooms. He had kept his word; a fierce battle had raged within him, but he had conquered himself and his passion.

His wife was yet a child; she seemed only slowly to ripen into womanhood.

Heart to Heart.

At night in her own room, Winona found herself trying to solve a question which of late had constantly tortured her; she found herself now blaming him for keeping away from her, for neglecting her, and only a few weeks ago she had feared his presence.

Gradually an intense longing crept into her heart to be more in his company, to be always near him; some irresistible power drew her to him. She was his wife, he was her husband. Was this married life?

Weeks ago she had feared even to be kissed by him, and now she hoped for something to happen. She could bear it no longer; she was constantly wishing that he would come nearer to her, that he would touch her. Yes, even strike her—anything; to put an end to this present state of existence.

One Saturday afternoon Ralph returned at one o'clock from his office, and asked her to take a car-ride with him to the Cliff House.

They had mounted one of the cars running around by the harbor, and riding along they en-

joyed for the hundredth time the unparalleled beauty of the Golden Gate. It was an ideal summer day, no gusty wind to mar the pleasure of being in the open air, to romp about the cliffs.

They took the road to the right of the Cliff House, down along the side of the cliff to the ocean; it is a wild, romantic spot. They walked down the hill, gathering wild flowers as they went, and inhaling the strong, bracing sea breeze.

Going down the steep slope she leaned on his strong arm, unconsciously pressing nearer to him and making Ralph's heart beat faster. He asked himself if it was the dangerous road only, or her heart, which prompted her to cling so closely to him; he looked down at her, into her uplifted eyes, which seemed to him to express tenderness, yes, even love. He took her hand, and holding it in his own, he admired its daintiness; "such hands belong to queens," he said, pressing it gently.

"Winona, my darling, I have often of late wished to ask you the question, are you happy? Do you ever regret having become my wife?"

"No, Ralph; I am happy, more happy to-day than I ever was in my life."

Her soft voice trembled and she closed her lips tightly to suppress a sigh of extreme happiness.

"Why should I regret being your wife? I did not know anything of life, I was an ignorant girl, and you have taught me so much; for all of which I am more than thankful to you."

"Winona, don't you know that you hurt me? Thankfulness! Bah! It is something else I would like to know that you feel for me."

He tried again to look into her eyes, but she had lowered them to the ground, so he could not see the deep blush which crept into her face.

Strolling leisurely along they came to a little hollow in the rocks; he jumped into it, leaving her standing at the edge. He looked up into her face; for a moment their eyes met, and both read the same question in each other's look; then he stretched out his arms towards her—"Dare you come to me, Winona?"

She closed her eyes, and without a single word, let herself fall into his outstretched arms.

He caught her, and clasping her tightly to his breast, he carried her to the beach, letting her softly down on the sand, and then, their hearts beating wildly, he kissed her longing, upturned mouth—kissed it a dozen times—till she sighed in sweet pain.

To-day for the first time they fully realized that they were husband and wife; the last few weeks had only been a dream.

They drove back to town and dined at Zinkand's; he said they would have their wedding dinner over again to-day.

How delightful it was to sit with her in the little box, to look into her eyes, so full of awakened love and tenderness. Now and again he would take both her little hands in his own and press them, kissing every finger separately, up to the slender wrist. He coaxed her to dip her lips into the iced champagne, that they might pledge anew their mutual health and happiness.

Having finished their dinner, he walked over to her side to pluck his dessert from her rosy lips, and those lips seemed to have waited only for a

touch of his own. Oh! what eternal joy there is in such a kiss!

They left the restaurant and walked across Market Street towards Ellis Street, to take the car for home. While they were waiting for it a business friend of Ralph's walked up to him and expressed a wish to see him on urgent business, so he helped his young wife into the car, sending her home alone and promising to follow her in half an hour. One last look into her eyes, one last hand pressure, and then he turned and went off with his business friend.

When she reached home she lighted all the lamps, and kindled the fire, so that her husband would find it cosy and warm on his return. Then she went to her own room, and after taking off her walking dress, she picked out the prettiest evening gown she possessed and put it on. When she had loosened her hair and stood before the mirror, the picture that reflected itself was beautiful.

For the first time she really was glad to be handsome, glad for his sake; her bare, snow-

white shoulders showed up wonderfully the luster of her sparkling eyes and golden hair.

Having finished her toilet, she returned to the drawing-room; there she waited for him. She sat down at the piano and let her fingers glide over the keys, thinking of her husband, who was such a master of the instrument. Then she took up a book and tried to read it, but she could not concentrate her mind on anything.

It grew later and later. "Oh, that tiresome business! Why must that man take my husband away from me to-day of all days? What in the world can be keeping him so long?" An undefined fear crept into her heart. "I hope nothing has happened to him—there, I hear voices—he must be coming."

She rushes up to the window. "No, it is not Ralph. Strangers passed the house."

As time goes on, she grows more and more nervous; she imagines hundreds of dreadful things that may have happened to him. She finds herself dressing; she will go out and hunt for him,

—and then—perhaps he might return and not find her in. Her heart aches; the tears run down her cheeks; she grows faint; she has to sit down. And there she sits and broods; she cannot even weep.

Her head falls on her hands, and she dozes, half-sleeping, half-listening to any sound, however slight it may be.

Then the bell rings. She jumps up. "Thank God, he is coming." She forgets that he has a latchkey and never rings the bell. She rushes up to the door and then—they lift into the hall a stretcher covered with a white sheet.

"Almighty God! is he dead?" is all she can gasp out. A man runs to her support, as she threatens to faint, but, with a supernatural effort she recovers her strength, and declines his assistance.

"Tell me, oh, tell me, is he dead?" she inquires eagerly.

"No," the man replies; "he is seriously injured, but he may recover."

"Then he lives! Thank God, he lives!"

She kneels down beside the stretcher. With a trembling hand she pulls the cover away; she looks into that dear face of his, and half-weeping, half-laughing, she buries her face in her hands.

CHAPTER IV.

TEMPTATION.

"DOCTOR, please give me your candid opinion about my husband's condition; the sooner I know the worst, the better it will be for me."

Dr. Harrison was an old gentleman, who during a long lifetime's experience in his profession had been familiar with pain and suffering in all its phases. He looked with pity at the pale and anxious face of the poor young wife, and never had his duty seemed to him so cruel as now.

"My child," he said, "at present I have little hope of his recovery, I am sorry to say. He will most likely grow weaker and weaker, and in time, I fear, become completely paralyzed; but I shall do all I can for him. His only chance of recovery is in careful nursing and entire freedom from excitement. But now, my dear Mrs. Carlton, let me advise you to take care of yourself;

you must take some rest, or you will make yourself ill, and who will look after your husband then?"

"Oh, doctor, how can I sleep or rest, knowing him to be in pain, or wanting me?"

"Let me warn you once more, my child. He does not suffer any physical pain at present, so go and lie down for awhile; later in the day I shall call again. Take care of yourself. Good-bye for the present."

And so the doctor left her alone, alone with her grief and sorrow.

The men who had brought him home had told her that an electric car had knocked him over and injured his spine.

She could not understand his condition. To all appearance he was well, only very weak; so weak that he could not even talk. He had tried hard in the morning to speak to her, but only inarticulate sounds had escaped his lips; his poor eyes—she could see him talk with them, she could understand their looks. What deep love and sorrow were expressed in them!

"Great God! if he should forever remain so, what torture it will be for him."

She returned to his bedside. At present he seemed to rest easily; his face had lost the lines of pain and grief, and his features looked quite natural.

The doctor had told her that he did not suffer any pain.

She sat down near him in an armchair. What a contrast between yesterday and to-day! Everything seemed so bright and joyful only twelve short hours ago, and now her joy had been turned into deep grief, and what had appeared to her a future of unalloyed happiness, presented nothing but sadness. Of one thing she was glad; she knew they loved each other, come what would.

Slowly her head fell backward, and the much-needed sleep closed her eyelids.

Ralph woke up and looked about him. There was his darling wife, sitting, nay asleep; let her sleep on, poor soul. What a terrible fate was hers! hardly a woman yet, and the wife of a useless invalid!

But he would recover; if only for her sake, he must get his strength back. It would take only a few days, a week or two at the longest, and he would be up again. How pale and worried she looked; if he could only talk to her and comfort her, a few words even. Again he tried to speak, but in vain; no sound escaped his lips. It seems to him as if his tongue had swollen so that it fills his whole mouth. He tries his arms, but they too are numb; he cannot even move them. How will he be able to tell his wife about his business affairs? How will he be able to tell her of that sum of money which he has lying in his secret drawer? He tortures his brain, he hunts for a single way out of this calamity; impossible, no way out of it. His heart is full of grief, and in his anguish and despair the tears start slowly and run down his cheeks.

Winona opens her eyes. Oh, God! she has been sleeping, she has neglected him; and when she sees he is weeping (there is no more heart-rending sight than to see a strong man weep), she rushes up to him, kneels down beside him, takes

his head between her hands and tries to kiss the tears away.

"Oh, Ralph, don't cry, my darling; please don't. I cannot bear to see you cry; it will break my heart. Oh, Ralph, dear, don't cry."

She had overestimated her strength; the despairing look in her husband's eyes made her frantic. She laid her head near his on the pillow and broke out in a fit of hysterical weeping; and there they lay, head on head, mingling their tears in their mutual despair.

Days, weeks, months went by. No change. He could not move, he could not speak; all he could do was to listen and look at her, and his eyes had so sad an expression that she was afraid to look at them; they drove the tears into her own.

The doctor and some of her acquaintances persuaded her to sue the Electric Street Car Company, for damages.

At first she refused to do so, but they talked her into it.

What a farce it had been! The railroad company, by means best known to themselves, had

won; the all-absorbing vampire had triumphed as it had so often done before, and the rest of the few dollars Winona possessed had gone to pay the court expenses.

To keep up her little home she had been compelled to look for a situation, so she went out and worked; but soon she had to give that up.

Winona Carlton was too handsome a woman not to attract attention.

Men can never see a woman alone and unprotected, without offering her their protection whether it is wanted or not; and besides that, she always feared something might happen at home in her absence. How terrible it would be if the house caught fire, and her helpless husband were smothered by the smoke or flames. But she must manage somehow to support herself and him, so she took to millinery work at home; but that proved insufficient. A neighbor of hers rented some of her rooms out, getting a good price for them; so she decided to do the same.

She could sleep in her husband's room on a

couch, and rent out her own bedroom and the drawing-room.

When her simple card, "Furnished Rooms to Let," had been out for over a week, a gentleman called; he looked at the rooms she showed him, then looked at her, and engaged them.

He was a Jew; he was tall, and, for a Jew, handsome looking, with very dark, fierce eyes. His appearance did not awaken in her any confidence, but she had no choice—"Beggars must not be choosers"—and as he paid her a whole month's rent in advance, she let him have the rooms.

Among others, Ruth Green had been to see her and tried to take her out, "Only for a little change," she said. "She must grow tired and stupid, remaining always near that sick husband of hers."

Ruth told her she had met some nice, influential gentleman; she had given up those young associates of hers; now she only kept company with moneyed men. "No more wasting time."

She told her she would introduce her to them, and there was no doubt that if she told them all her circumstances, they would be only too glad to

assist her. Her dearest friend at present was a colonel. Whenever she mentioned him she showed a diamond brooch and various other tokens of affection he had presented her with.

"Now, Winona, don't be foolish; just come out once. We will go to the theater and afterwards to Delmonico's for a quiet, innocent little supper; there will only be my colonel, his friend, the millionaire, Mr. Goldie, and you and I." But all her entreaties were unheeded. Winona would always refuse.

Those "innocent little suppers"! How well Ruth Green knew them!

A nice little cabinet apart on the third floor, covers laid for four. There she and one of her chums would meet those two middle-aged, prosperous gentlemen, both of them gourmands in victuals, wine and women. Champagne would flow, money would count for nothing so long as there were more estates to plunder (the colonel was a lawyer). Slowly but surely the champagne would do its work. In time all four might be seen leaning with their elbows on the table, star-

ing at each other with glassy eyes, and laughing over some imbecile joke, and then benedictine and brandy would do the rest. "Enjoy yourselves to-day, to-morrow you will be a long time dead." And they did enjoy themselves—at least they imagined they did. They stopped at nothing; why should they? hadn't they the money? Money buys everything; everything has its price, men's honor and women's love, and, as connoisseurs say, "There is no price too high to pay for the favor of a pretty woman."

Next morning the ladies of the company would put on just a little more rouge, blacken their eyebrows and lashes just a little more, and return to their pretence of daily work.

Such were the "innocent little suppers" of Miss Green.

All those temptations Winona withstood bravely, working her little hands sore, nursing her poor, sick husband, never for a moment envying her friends their enjoyment; only praying to God to make her Ralph strong and well again.

Ruth Green tried two or three times more to induce Winona to accompany her. Her millionaire friend had expressed a desire for something new and fresh; all her old chums were too well known to him, and she thought Winona would just suit him. She begged her to do it just for her sake, to keep her on good terms with those influential friends of hers; she would see that no harm came to her.

Winona firmly refused, so Ruth Green left her, disgusted and angry, calling her in her heart an ungrateful minx. Winona's chaste way of living was somewhat of a thorn in her side. "Did that silly thing imagine herself better than she?" Ruth Green had been a good-looking girl before she had started on her present way of living. Now she was handsome—a dangerously handsome woman; her form had developed to perfection, and she was like a wild tigress, full of life, thirsting for the wildest excitement. Such a life seems to agree with a woman for a time. She usually grows prettier; she is like a hothouse plant. What a pity it does not last! And then to hide those pale

cheeks, and those little dark lines creeping round the eyes, it is necessary to take refuge in powder and rouge.

In a few years the face becomes cadaverous, the eyes shine unnaturally bright; in time they too grow dimmer and dimmer, and then there comes the remorse, the terrible remorse, over lost youth and wasted womanhood. Then she stretches her arms out longingly for a true and sincere friend. There is not one; they all have left her.

CHAPTER V.

MOSE GANS.

Mose Gans, Winona's lodger, was a retired stockbroker, a man forty-three years of age. He had never married, preferring to live an independent life of unrestricted freedom and variety. He was rich; he had far more money than he required, so he had played the protector of many a struggling actress and singer.

One afternoon while walking along Market Street, he happened to see Winona Carlton hurrying homeward; he was at once struck with the charm of her appearance, and turned to follow her at a respectful distance.

Taking note of the number and name of the street, he returned the following day, and noticing the sign, "Furnished Rooms to Let," he entered the house on the pretence that he was looking for rooms.

He had lived till then at one of the fashionable hotels, but Winona's beauty induced him to take these rooms. For a long time he had not seen such a handsome young woman; but it was only on rare occasions that he got a glimpse of her. She never came near him except when he forced his presence on her. He had usually been fairly successful with women, and he could not understand why this woman kept entirely out of his way. He was quite at a loss to know how to approach her, how to win her confidence.

He planned all sorts of ways to get acquainted with her, to break down the barrier which kept her aloof from him.

Strolling along the grand stand at Ingleside one race day, he saw Ruth Green sitting surrounded by a group of young *bon-vivants,* like a reigning queen. She had of late become quite fashionable.

He knew most of the gay *jolies femmes* of San Francisco, and he was known to be quite a lucky tipster.

Ruth, seeing him, sang out: "Mose, whom are you favoring? Give me a tip."

"My dear girl," he replied, "you are nearer to the oracle than I am,"—meaning her millionaire friend. Nevertheless he walked up to her, and leaning over the back of her chair, entered into conversation with her.

It was ladies' day at Ingleside; that means free admission for the fair sex. What a compliment to the ladies! What unselfish magnanimity on the part of the management! But what a fearful temptation to the women, bringing often in its train grief, dishonor and ruin, to many a family.

Ruth Green and Mose Gans watched the kaleidoscope of human emotions for a while in silence. Then—"Where have you kept yourself lately, Mose? I haven't seen you about at all. Some new infatuation? What! you sigh! Is it as bad as that? Poor Mose, I pity you."

"Ruth, she is the handsomest woman in all 'Frisco; after you," with a bow to Ruth. "Such a Diana-like figure; such exquisite eyes; such a sad expression in them and in her small mouth.

How is it that sad looking women always attract me most? They must appeal to my heart, I think, making me long to comfort them, to make them smile. They look so innocent; as if they never knew what sin was."

"Mose, you are getting sentimental; better tell me who she is; some newly discovered opera star or ballerina?"

"Nothing of the kind,—my new landlady."

"Bah! how prosaic; but what is her name?"

"Winona Carlton."

"What! Winona Carlton, in Ellis Street? Impossible!"

"Why should it be impossible? She had rooms to let, I walked in, saw the rooms, saw her, engaged the rooms, and have lived there now for over a week. Can you blame me?"

"No, Mose; but give this game up, old boy; it is as good as lost; take my advice. I have known Winona for years. Do you know she is married? Married to a paralyzed invalid?"

"No, I did not know that; but what of it? It only makes things easier, and safer."

"There you are right, Mose. Now I wish you luck. There is not much love lost between Winona and me nowadays."

"The horses are at the post; bye-bye,"—and he walked off.

From that day he began the siege in earnest; he believed in perseverance—"The continual dropping of water will wear through a stone"—so he kept on and on. He at first made use of Ruth Green's name to break the ice; then by and by he had offered, and in fact had helped her in many ways. Money had never counted for much with him as long as he saw a chance of being paid back some day. He had been accustomed to pay for everything he had ever got.

Slowly he won her confidence; his burning, lascivious eyes at first disturbed her, but she gradually overcame that feeling, and began to think that she had wronged him.

He was so kind to her; her pecuniary condition improved; he had always something for her to do, some trifling little commission for himself or his friends. She became quite used to look for as-

sistance from him. Whenever she needed some money she would borrow it from him; just borrow it.

He would often present her with tickets for the matinée. She would not go out at night, but her neighbor and she would take advantage, for a few hours on Saturday afternoon, of his kindness.

One day she had come to him again to ask some little favor, which he instantly granted, and then coming nearer to her, he clasped her in his arms and tried to kiss her.

She had felt at first quite stunned, unable to resist, to move. Then pushing him from her, she had fled from the room, dropping the money on the floor.

She fled direct to her husband's bedside; there he lay, her poor, helpless husband, all the protection she had. His eyes seemed to question her, —Why was she so red? why did her bosom heave so fiercely?

She took his hand in hers to find comfort and to soothe her nerves, which seemed to be all un-

strung; but her heart continued for a long time to beat as violently as before.

From that day her heart seemed changed. All its usual tranquillity had gone from it; the sound of her lodger's footsteps alone would cause it to beat faster.

She had not seen him for days after that circumstance; he purposely kept away from her, till one day she accidentally met him in the hall. He begged her pardon, accused himself in the cruelest words for his ungentlemanly behavior, called himself a brute,—and, finally invited her to go out with him for a drive, just to show that she did not bear any ill-will towards him—that she had fully pardoned him.

What should she do? He seemed so genuinely repentant; perhaps it had been to some extent her own fault.

"Very well," she said, "I will take a drive with you this afternoon, and we will be the good friends we have been."

Confidingly she extended her hand and they shook hands.

A team of trotters drove up to one of the establishments along the beach; the couple alighted and walked up to a private room, leaving the horses in charge of the groom. They had been driving fast, and the fresh breeze off the water had made her feel rather cold, so her escort invited her to take some hot drink to warm herself up.

She had enjoyed the drive immensely. Mose had let her handle the reins along the beach; she had never driven fast horses before, and did not know what a pleasurable excitement it was.

The room they occupied was warmed by a good fire, so she took her jacket off, displaying her supple form in a very becoming light silk shirt-waist.

Sitting in an easy-chair, a sweet hot drink before her, she felt really comfortable, and grateful to her escort for giving her all that pleasure. She sipped the hot punch, and gradually the liquor loosened her tongue, and she began to chat away, telling him her whole life, exchanging confidences.

"And thus," she said, "we have been living."

"But, my dear, do you expect to live always so?"

Her eyes assumed a sadder expression.

"It is all I can expect now; the doctor says there is some faint hope of my husband's recovery, and if he should recover—"Oh! it would be too great a happiness."

He did not care that she should talk of her husband; she should forget him—for a while, at any rate—so he ordered some more drinks.

A woman who is not accustomed to take liquor never knows what its effects will be till it becomes too strong for her. Her escort coaxed her to take just one more drink—positively the last.

The liquor drove the hot blood into her face; it coursed madly through her veins; a delicious feeling of languor crept over her,—all her sorrows seemed slowly, gradually to disappear, the world seemed so light, so rosy.

He had watched her all the time, knowing very well what he was doing.

Now his time had come; he had triumphed; one more bird caught.

CHAPTER VI.

LOST.

WINONA rose from her writing-desk. She had just finished a letter to Mose Gans.

"SIR:—After what happened yesterday I must ask you to leave this house at once. If you will not go, I shall be compelled to do so, taking him with me. I shall wait till one o'clock, and if you have not left by that time, I shall."

She walked up to his room and slipped the letter under the door. Just as she was doing so, the door opened and he stood before her, a satirical smile playing on his lips.

"*Un billet d'amour?*" Conceited ass that he was. The woman did not understand what he had said. As he was looking down at her, all her determination seemed to leave her; she trem-

bled like a rabbit before a snake, unable to utter a word.

He waited for a few seconds, then pulling her into his room he shut the door. Taking up the letter he opened it—Winona had turned her back on him,—and read it, then tearing it in pieces, he threw it into the grate.

"Little fool!" approaching her—she shrank from him into the furthest corner of the room—"Why, you little fool, did you write me this? What has happened, has happened; no use crying over it." Trying to embrace her, "You are mine, and now when I have won you I shall never give you up."

"Won me! Ha! ha!"—she had recovered her speech,—"Won me! You liar, liar, liar! Won me! I despise you, hate you, you robber, thief,—yes, thief. Oh! you needn't frown."

Losing more and more control of herself, she walked close up to him, shaking excitedly her clenched hand in his face.

She actually frightened him; he changed color. The coward, he was afraid for his face. She,

noticing it, stopped short and wrung her hands in despair.

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "what have I done that you should punish me so much as to let me fall into the hands of such a man? Man is too noble a name for such a monster."

He tried to pacify her.

"Don't touch me; keep your hands off me, you miserable coward! Oh! if you only knew how I loathe you."

She had fallen down on the couch, pressing her hands before her eyes and breaking out into hysterical weeping.

He let her sob herself out. It was nothing new to him; he had seen such sights before, only this woman really frightened him. But now, as she had grown quieter, he approached her again.

Seating himself near her he tried to calm her. "Don't cry, Winona dear; I will be your everlasting friend—all I possess shall be yours. Winona, you are too handsome a woman to waste your sweetness unseen, unloved, and I admire you. I love you more than any woman I ever met. Come,

dry your tears. Be mine, and you will never regret it. I will make you envied by every woman in this town. You shall have all the diamonds you can dream of to match your brilliant eyes."

She had stopped crying, and watching him she listened impatiently to his entreaties. Oh! how she hated him! She could have strangled him—killed him then and there. How she wished she could revenge herself—her and all those other women—on this vile, unscrupulous blackguard. Revenge was all that was left to her, and, by Heaven! she would be revenged.

She became Mose Gans' mistress.

They left the house in Ellis Street, he having furnished for her a magnificent villa, suggesting at the same time to take her husband to the hospital; he would engage a special room for him and pay all expenses. But that she positively refused to do; she would not part from her husband.

In the new house Ralph received the best room, and she would, as of old, attend to him herself.

She would hardly allow anybody else to touch him. Mose Gans had never seen the invalid.

When she was out with her lover, magnificently dressed and loaded with diamonds, driving behind blood horses, she was the gay, frivolous woman of fashion, eager in the pursuit of pleasure. Her extravagance knew no bounds; dragging her lover behind her in a whirlpool of excitement which dazed and alarmed him. Once he had tried to remonstrate with her, but the look of scorn and contempt with which she regarded him silenced him for good. He knew that he was envied by many a Crœsus the possession of his queenly mistress, and that if he didn't supply all her wants, somebody else would.

She had completely enslaved him, and he who, before he met her, thought he had had quite enough of women, felt that he could not live without her.

He had been compelled to sell property and mining shares to keep up the pace; he even returned to the Stock Exchange to try to increase his income by speculation.

Winona, when alone with her husband, was a different woman. She always wore the same old dresses she had worn before her heart had known all those wild emotions and crimes. A mother could not have been more tender with her sick child than she was with him. All seemed the same; Ralph would smile at her with his eyes, lying there and watching her movements about the room. But, oh, God! Why did she cry so often of late? Why did she not kiss his lips now as she used to do? Why did she kneel beside him, sobbing and covering his hands with kisses?

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUIN OF MOSE GANS.

'A' YEAR passed away and it seemed as if Ralph were slowly recovering.

Winona had sent for a New York celebrity to consult him about her husband's condition. The great man had crossed the continent especially to see the poor paralyzed man. His visit had cost a small fortune; but all he did, or could do, was to corroborate Dr. Harrison's opinion of the case, giving exactly the same advice: "Perfect quietness, and no excitement under any circumstances; time might do the rest, but human help was entirely out of the question."

For some little time back the invalid had shown signs of improvement. His fingers had begun to move; all day long his wife had seen him trying to shut and open them. She had given him a pencil, as he seemed with his eyes to beg for

it; but he could not hold it—his fingers were not yet strong enough—and it had slipped out of his hand, bringing tears of disappointment into his eyes.

Winona would watch these improvements with an anxious heart. How she wished that she could give her life to save this man; he was her idol, her king. Why should she be strong and well, and this once strong and noble man be so cruelly tortured? Could there be any justice in this? She began to doubt the very existence of the Deity. If there was a God, why did he send prosperity and health to such a creature as Mose Gans?

That man had become utterly unbearable to her. His presence alone was sickening, but his caresses were loathsome; the moment he came near her, her heart seemed to stop beating—she positively shivered as with cold. Her treatment of him grew more and more cold and cruel, she spurning him away from her like a dog. Notwithstanding all this, he would return, his face distorted by a silly grin, and beg her to drive out with him to theaters, to suppers.

Gradually she had begun to drink. At first only a little glass of brandy, then more and more, until now she had to dose herself with absinthe; and only when the poison had worked in her brain and made her more like a beast than a human being, did she tolerate his caresses.

To-night again she had to dress and look gay and bright, but she felt so tired. She had grown disgusted with life, and were it not for her husband's sake, she would make an end of it all.

To-night Mose and she were to be guests of Mr. Goldie. He was to give a great feast to his boon companions; "In your honor, my queen," he had whispered into her ear a week ago at the Columbia Theater, where he had met Mose and her. The millionaire seemed to have only eyes now for that sad-looking, bewitching creature, Winona Carlton.

And why should he not possess her? Wasn't he richer, far richer than that Jew? It was rumored on the Stock Exchange that the Jew was on his last legs; in fact, he himself had helped

to give Mose Gans a slight push on the downward path, to hasten his disappearance from the scene.

Mr. Goldie's elegant little mansion—one he used for small parties of this kind,—was brilliantly lighted up. Negro servants glided along the various apartments, giving the finishing touches for the reception of the guests.

At half-past nine the carriages and hacks came rolling along the avenue, and soon all the guests had arrived.

The men of the company were mostly successful business men; the women their mistresses. Conspicuous among even this set of beautiful women was Winona, who eclipsed them all by her beauty and queenly bearing.

As soon as she stepped into the drawing-room, attired in a close-fitting, red silk gown, her brilliant eyes rivaling the luster of her diamonds, many a woman felt a pang of jealousy creep to her heart, a fear lest she should lose her master.

How foolish they were! That woman hardly thought of her surroundings; her thoughts were far away, her body alone was there.

There was some dancing, but Winona would not indulge in it. She preferred to sit in a little alcove watching the crowd.

Ruth Green came over to her, and after affectionately kissing her dear rival, dropped into an easy-chair near her.

When Ruth Green had found out about Mose Gans and Winona, she had felt a malicious glow of satisfaction, and shrugged her shoulders in pitying contempt. "Who could have imagined such a thing about the proud Winona? Who would have thought that that shy, innocent girl would carry on a flirtation with her lodger? 'Still waters run deep.'"

Ruth Green was to-night in high spirits. She had landed another gold-fish. Leaning comfortably back in her chair, balancing one leg over the other, she passed in review all the people she knew, allowing her sarcasm freely to play on them.

"There, Winona, look at that little, bow-legged fellow puffing himself up like a rooster; do you know who he is? No! you don't? Well, he is

Mr. Short, political boss. Only see how his evening coat fits him, tight as a strait-waistcoat; he would be more like himself if he took it off and stood in his shirt sleeves, as he used to do years ago behind the bar, before he decided to become a star in the political firmament. Only look how he tries to make an impression on us, ogling with his ferret eyes, the ugly little brute.

"And there, look at Mr. Long, with his big ears and hands, not knowing what to do with his limbs. Have you seen his celebrated art gallery? No! a pity you haven't; it is a wonder; full of Meissoniers, Maquarts and Murillos; and do you know how he collected them? No!—only a few years ago he came down from Arizona, or God knows what other wild country, a rough, uncouth looking miner. Selling his claims, he made millions, and now he is trying hard to become a gentleman. When building his great mansion he employed a decorative agent to help him to make it a residence worthy of his financial and social position. The agent he employed robbed him of thousands, by his gallery of foreign artists. No-

body knows where he dug them out, but as they look quite worn and dirty, Mr. Long swears to their being old masters, and never lets an opportunity slip to show his friends his 'Macs and Gorillas. Confound those foreign names! I never can spell 'em, but you bet, the pictures are all right.'

"Next, he boasts of a library of 50,000 volumes. When his agent came to him enquiring what kind of books he wished him to supply, he said, 'Oh, just the usual kind a gentleman of my standing would have.'

" 'How would you like them bound? In Russia or Morocco?'

" 'Darn Russia and Morocco! Get them bound here in 'Frisco.' "

And so Ruth Green chattered away till a game of poker was started, and as the host came up to talk to Winona, Ruth walked over to the tables.

Mr. Goldie escorted Winona to one of the adjoining rooms, away from the rest of the company, for a quiet chat; there she sat down, he standing before her. He had led her to this place,

brutally to offer her more money for her possession than the Jew would have been able to give her in all his life. But now when he stood before her he could not find words to tell her so; something in her bearing discouraged him.

Could it be possible that this woman loved that Jew?—No, how could he imagine such a thing? But what on earth could have driven her into his arms?

"Mr. Goldie," she broke the silence, "why did you lead me to this place, and what can I do for you? Name the favor you were hinting at, and if it should be in my power, I will grant it. I always try to please my friends."

There was nobody near; the dance music only faintly reached their ears, so bending close to her he whispered:

"It is in your power; you can make me the happiest of mortals. Winona, I love you, worship you; be mine! What can you see in that Jew? Leave him. I will carry you on my hands; I will make you independent for life, I will——"

"Stop, Mr. Goldie," she interrupted, "don't say

anything more; it would be futile. Mose Gans will be my only lover; after him there will be no more lovers." Rising, "Let us return to the gaming table, Mr. Goldie; the ladies will miss you."

"Please stay; listen to me, I implore you."

All his entreaties were unheeded; she walked past him and he had to follow her. The game was at its height. Mose Gans had been losing heavily, and seeing him leave one of the tables, she took his place. And she played—played recklessly, wildly. People had always wondered why she gambled. She seemed not to understand the game at all and would always lose, and lose immense sums. To-night again she lost hundreds, till her purse was empty.

Turning to Mose Gans, she said: "Mose, give me your purse."

As he did no respond, she repeated her demand. Some gentleman sitting near her got interested and listened. She had to repeat her demand for the third time; then he looked at her, only to refuse. Hardly had he done so, when a dozen men offered her various sums of money;

but she shook her head, thanked them, and left the gaming table without paying the slightest attention to Mose Gans. He followed her like a whipped dog. After telling one of the negro servants to call her carriage, she walked to the vestibule. Mose covered her with her opera cloak, and they entered the carriage.

Neither spoke. They drove home in silence, she staring before her into space, he fidgeting about and biting his mustache nervously. When they reached home and alighted from the carriage, she walked straight to her own apartment, he following her. Reaching her rooms she stopped, and looking contemptuously over her shoulder at him, she said: "What! you here! What do you want?"

"Winona, are you angry with me? forgive me; I could not give you any money, I had lost my all, myself."

"Mr. Goldie would have cashed your check."

"Had I written a check it would have been a felony, as I have no more money in the bank. Winona, I am ruined."

Her cloak had fallen from her shoulders; she stood before him in all her beauty, her bare arms folded.

"So you are ruined!" Her voice sounded as cold as steel, her eyes looked cruelly into his distorted face. With a ring of triumph, "So you are ruined!"

"Winona, I have lost everything for love of you; for your sake I returned to the Stock Exchange, but everything has gone against me."

"For love of me! You call that love? Ha! ha! Mose Gans and love! Ha! ha! Perhaps you think it was love that made me tolerate you? Love for you! Revenge was what I wanted, and revenge I have got. As you robbed me years ago of that which I valued more than life, I in return have robbed you of everything you possessed, and now—you may go."

"Winona, I implore you, have pity on me; if you send me away, I cannot live without you. I will kill myself."

"Go ahead; kill yourself. That will be the only

good action of your life; and now—leave me," pointing to the door.

Her words sounded so cold, so cruel, there seemed not the slightest hope of her relenting, and then and there he realized that his case was lost.

For some seconds he stood still, watching like a cat ready for a spring; then a devilish thought struck him. He turned quickly, and tearing open the door of the sick man's room he entered it. With a wild, terror-stricken cry she followed him, throwing herself between him and her husband.

"There, cuckold," he shouted, "look at your wife; look at those diamonds, look at that dress, all bought with my money. My money has paid for everything you see, my hands have caressed those shoulders, my lips have kissed that mouth; your wife is my mistress."

She rushed up to him, striking him repeatedly with her clenched hand in the face, screaming, "You coward, you contemptible coward!" and then with the strength of a lioness she dragged him out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MURDER.

RALPH'S heart gave a fearful leap.

"What did that man say?"

His money had bought everything here! His hands had caressed her shoulders! His lips had kissed her mouth! She was his mistress!

"Impossible; it could not be true. It must be an infernal lie. Oh! that scoundrel! if he could only lay hands on him, he would strangle him—tear him to pieces."

He struggled desperately to rise; he gnashed his teeth; the cold perspiration stood in big drops on his forehead.

A scream—the fearful scream of a misused, defenceless woman—reached his ears.

That coward must have been striking her—striking his wife—his poor, defenceless wife! Great heavens! He tried to scream, and then,

Oh, God! a sound like a whistle escaped him; his body shook like an aspen leaf; his teeth chattered wildly, as if he were freezing with cold; then he felt his blood gradually flow back into his limbs; they seemed to be pricked by thousands of needles; he tried to open and close his hands.

He prayed to God to give him strength, just enough strength to punish that man; he would die willingly after that.

His prayer was answered.

Gradually he felt his powers come back to him, limb by limb.

He rolled on to the floor, and lay there for some minutes trying to recover his breath; then he began to crawl on all fours into the next room; very slowly he advanced; it took him a long time, but he reached it at last. He looked about him; everything was quiet now. The moon shone through the half-drawn curtains, dimly lighting the room; he crept along the soft carpet, trusting to instinct; then his hand touched something; it was a pair of scissors; he clutched them and continued to crawl slowly along till he reached the

bed. It was a magnificent brass bedstead. When he grasped the rail it seemed to nerve him; the cold metal soothed his burning hands.

Slowly he pulled himself up; he stood erect, looking down at a female form clad in evening dress, lying on its face.

It was his wife.

He wanted to approach her, to touch her; he stopped short. "Did she not speak in her sleep?" Surely he heard her speak; he listened breathlessly; she seemed to whisper something; he could not make out what she said.

"Louder, louder," he imagined himself saying.

She obeyed mechanically. She began to speak more distinctly, her breath going and coming in gasps.

He bends nearer and nearer, not to lose a single word, not to lose a single whisper.

"Ralph!" His own name! "Oh, Ralph, why has fate been so cruel to us? Why should I have met you and learned to love you, to worship you, and then—— Oh, God! I shudder to think of it."

Now she ceases to speak. His heart seems like bursting; his eyes are riveted on her mouth, lest any word should escape him. His presence seems to draw her towards him; she moves and turns, then she begins to talk again.

"Don't ask me, for pity's sake, don't ask me, I cannot tell you. I will not tell you. Oh, my poor heart, how it aches! Ralph, have mercy on me! I must not tell you."

He hears himself hissing out, "Winona, you *must* tell me—tell me!"

"Ralph, if it has to be—if you must know it—well then—— I *am* his mistress."

Those words strike him like a blow in the face. He staggers backward, then grasping the scissors more firmly, he creeps up to her, bends over her, and covering his eyes with his left hand, he plunges the scissors deep into her heart.

One long-drawn sigh, then everything is as still as death.

He dropped the scissors, and without removing his hand from his eyes he staggers back, supporting himself against the wall with his other hand,

back to his own room. He reaches his bed and throws himself upon it. His teeth chatter, he feels his body growing cold as ice, and he pulls the bedclothes over head and face; he wants to cry out, and to smother it he stuffs the blanket into his mouth. There he lay, gradually getting more and more benumbed. His limbs again refuse to move, his heart beats fainter and fainter; soon all will be over.

A thousand memories, a thousand pictures rush through his fevered brain. He seems to have forgotten everything—everything except the days of his childhood; his mind dwells alone on those happy by-gone days. And then he feels his life's blood ebbing away, his heartbeat growing more irregular, then seeming to stop, then speeding on again. Now the hand of death is upon him—he cannot breathe—it seems as if a millstone lay upon his heart.

"Winona! Oh, Winona!"

When the beams of the morning sun crept into the silent room,—they lingered on the calm and placid features of a corpse.

L of C.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIAL.

"TERRIBLE TRAGEDY ON NOB HILL! HORRIBLE MURDER OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN! WHO COMMITTED THE CRIME?

"EARLY this morning a reporter of the *X Rays,* was passing California Street, when a servant-woman came rushing out of a house, screaming, 'Murder! Murder!' at the top of her voice. In a few seconds a mob had gathered, pressing around the woman, eager to find out all she knew.

"Led by the woman, our reporter entered the house, followed by the crowd, and there in a magnificently furnished bedroom he found the body of a beautiful woman, clad in a gorgeous red silk gown and covered with diamonds, lying

on her back, the bedclothes steeped in blood which had flowed from a ghastly wound in her breast.

"Our reporter, who had done such valuable service on former occasions, at once plunged into detective work.

"On entering the adjoining room they came upon the corpse of a man lying on the bed. Could he have done the deed and then committed suicide? No; impossible!

"The man was Ralph Carlton, the woman's husband, who had been a helpless paralytic for the last two years; evidently he had been smothered in his bed.

"Who, then, could the black villain be? There had been another man living in the house, one Mose Gans. The rumors went that he had been that woman's lover. His bedroom had been unoccupied, his bed untouched. People had seen him leaving the house early in the morning. It must be that man.

"On Mose Gans rests a terrible suspicion. Where is he? Has he fled?

"The police and our special reporter are feverishly working to solve this mystery."

So much for the *X Rays.*

Late that night two detectives arrested Mose Gans over in Oakland; they had found him in a hotel, very much the worse for liquor.

When they laid hands on him, he had stared stupidly at them, murmuring only: "I am ruined! What do you want?"

They led him to the city jail and charged him with murder. And so poor Mose Gans became a criminal hero.

A criminal trial frequently assumes the appearance of a trial of strength between the opposing lawyers, rather than a calm discussion that shall deal out justice. The moral effect is bad, because a hardened criminal begins to look upon a successful lawyer as his best friend—as a man who can, and will for a consideration, stand between him and punishment. The prosecuting attorney, on the other hand, is feared as much almost by the innocent as the guilty; he is re-

garded as deliberately taking advantage of every possible subterfuge to get a conviction.

No doubt the prosecutor is bound by his oath to consider equally the interests of the prisoner and those of society; but that he does not always do so calmly and judicially is too often self evident. The contest of legal ingenuity becomes exciting, and the guilt or innocence of the accused appears to be only a secondary consideration.

The lawyers on both sides battle for reputation. If lawyers would honestly undertake not to defraud justice by screening the guilty; if judge and jury would sift the evidence in a criminal case as calmly as any other subject, realizing their fearful responsibility, and taking it as a supreme duty, then crime would have a new check, and respect for the law would increase.

And take the daily newspapers. Don't they condemn, hang a man, before even a warrant for his arrest is out?

Is that fair?

All the time that Mose Gans' trial was going on, you could not pick up a newspaper in the city

without seeing either his fierce countenance depicted there, or whole columns of print retailing all his sayings and doings, and speculating as to his innocence or guilt. That he had slept well; that he had eaten poached or scrambled eggs for breakfast; that he had dressed with care, to receive in style the many fair belles who came to visit him and present him with flowers.

The first day of the Mose Gans' murder trial had arrived.

An extraordinary, fashionable audience awaited the commencement of proceedings. Three parts of the audience belonged to the gentler sex; they had been sitting there for hours. Many had brought a lunch basket along with them, patiently awaiting the great moment when they would lead into the court-room that terrible Jew.

Poor, innocent Mose! Since his arrest months ago, his head had been swimming. He had constantly tried to explain things, declared under oath, cursed, given his word of honor, but all to no purpose. People seemed to have grown stupid—idiotic. *He* commit a bloody murder? What

absurdity! He, who would not even touch a loaded revolver if he could help it. But the jury surely would not believe all those lies invented by the prosecuting attorney! All that circumstantial evidence was pure rot. And so he had worn quite a smiling and confident expression throughout the whole trial, hoping that there would soon be an end to this farce.

The judge had summoned up all the evidence and addressed the jury, after which they retired.

Now they return; it had taken them only half an hour to decide.

Complete silence reigns. You could hear a pin drop, and then——

"Guilty of murder in the first degree."

A murmur of mixed emotions, relief or surprise, pity or satisfaction, runs through the vast crowd.

THE SENTENCE.

"Mose Gans, you have been found by a jury of your countrymen guilty of murder in the first

degree. The sentence of the court is that you shall be taken to Saint Quentin's, and there, on the morning of the fifteenth day of May, at seven o'clock, you shall be hanged by the neck till you are dead.

"And may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

CHAPTER X.

THE EXECUTION.

SINCE the day of his condemnation, Mose Gans had been entirely stupefied. The verdict had almost robbed him of his mental faculties.

All day long he would sit staring in front of him, muttering incoherent sentences; "I am ruined"—"Guilty of murder in the first degree"—"Hanged by the neck"—"Lord have mercy on your soul."

For days he would hardly touch his food. At other times he would devour it ravenously, asking, begging for more.

At times he would imagine himself on the Stock Exchange, shouting out the names and prices of stocks. Then again he would shrink into a corner of his cell, and there whine, "Winona, don't send me away, don't. Oh, don't!" At other times he would jump up, and with foam on his lips,

shriek out, "Fools! Imbeciles! Scoundrels! I tell you I am innocent."

He would rave about his cell, shaking the iron bars and striking them with his fist, his frantic cries resounding through the corridors, till he would collapse and drop on to his bench from sheer exhaustion, the tears running down his cheeks, murmuring, "Have pity on me! Have pity on me! I am innocent!"

The morning of the execution has arrived. Soon they will lead him to the gallows.

A rabbi has come to assist him in his dying hour.

Mose will not listen to him. He orders him away with curses and blasphemy, but the rabbi remains near him to the bitter end, praying to Jehovah to forgive the poor, stubborn, unrepentant sinner.

Now he hears them come to lead him to the gallows.

He retires to the furthest corner of his cell, staring gloomily at the men as they enter.

The Execution.

When they approach him, he screams out: "Don't touch me, you cowards! How dare you come and murder me? A thousand curses on your heads, you infernal butchers!"

When they lay hands on him, he beats them off, struggling violently, biting, scratching, spitting.

Finally they conquer him. He is exhausted, he can hardly stand up any longer. He breaks down, sinks on his knees. His whole body is shaken by convulsive sobs, and he whines: "Oh, God! I am innocent—innocent—have mercy on me!"

Supported by the rabbi he staggers to the scaffold, where he is launched into eternity.

FINIS.

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